



BLM's Role in Protecting Open Space in the East



Lower Potomac River Project, Maryland

Vision: The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is poised to take a leadership role in the protection of green space and critical conservation areas in the states that are contiguous and east of the Mississippi River. By closely working with land and resource conservation organizations, local and State governments, and other Federal agencies, BLM can play a key role in ensuring there are public recreation opportunities, open spaces, protection and interpretation for watersheds, unique geological, historical, and critical habitat areas that are threatened by urban sprawl and development.

BLM has expertise in managing public lands for competing uses and making resource allocation decisions with open public involvement that is considered an integral part of effective management. BLM has a reputation for working closely with other organizations, local and State governments, and other agencies. This is particularly true in the East, where BLM was a charter affiliate of the Eastern Lands and Resources Council, and has successfully managed lands and resources in a cooperative and consensual manner for more than 50 years.

Project Description: The Lower Potomac River Project lies in a lightly populated area of southern Maryland in western Charles County. The remaining portions of these once agricultural and rural peninsula counties are experiencing rapid suburban growth, both from the expanding economic opportunities created by increased military and contractor presence, as well as the growth of outlying suburbs of Washington, DC. Urban sprawl and the vanishing open space in urban areas of the east is a growing concern. In fact, southern Maryland is currently the fastest growing area in the state of Maryland. The Douglas Point project has 10 miles of shoreline, with a magnificent hardwood forest. There are very few tracts of land as pristine as this so close to Washington, D.C.

The project area contains the following historic and environmental values:

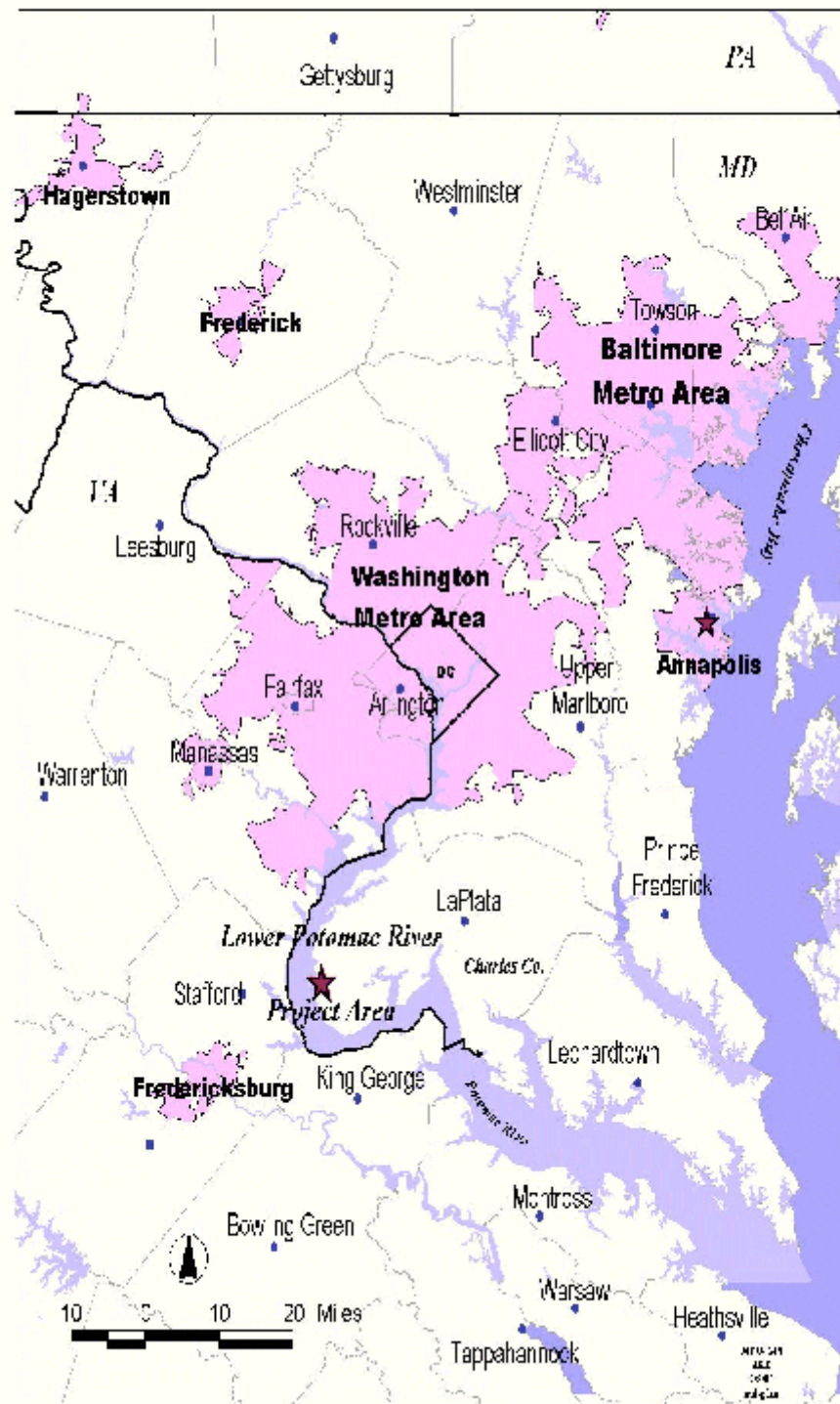
- the location of a Civil War encampment of approximately 25,000 troops.
- native Indian archeological sites and other land and water archeological sites.
- wildlife habitat for innumerable varieties of species including the American bald eagle, osprey, egret, river otter, beaver, painted tortoise, and fish habitat for anadromous and semi-anadromous fishes.
- unique wetland and woodland habitat including evolving ecology within shipwreck areas.

Conclusion: Congress has appropriated \$3.0 million to the BLM to acquire lands in the project area. The State has requested matching funds from the Maryland legislature. On December 13, 2000, the BLM, the State, and Charles County signed a Memorandum of Understanding which establishes a frame work for cooperation to facilitate acquisition of lands along the Potomac River

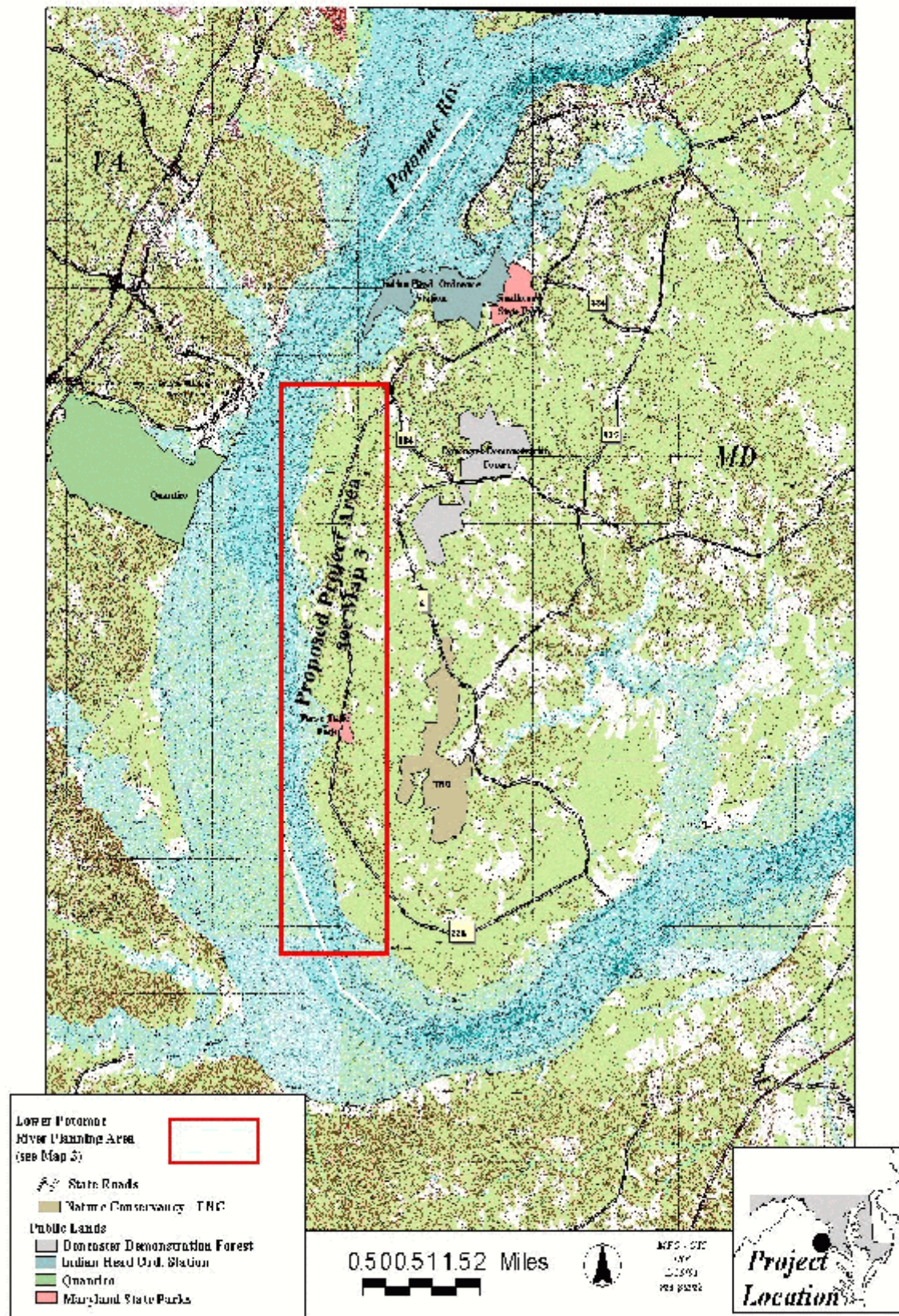
The BLM will continue verifying the area's resource values to determine the appropriate mix of access, recreation, and resource conservation. BLM will begin a planning process under the National Environmental Policy Act, which will include site surveys and solicitation and review of public comment. This process will be coordinated with the States's Department of Natural Resources and Charles County.

April 24, 2001

Map 1 - Regional Locator



Map 2 - Lower Potomac River Planning Area



Map 3 - Project Watersheds

